

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Are youth really responsible for their actions?

There are 77 offenders on Death Row for crimes committed as a juvenile. Regardless of the “immaturity or capacity for change”, a choice has been made. The U.S.A is only one of 6 countries that has executed juvenile offenders since 1990 (Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia are the others). There has been 10 executions in the US over the last ten years (equal to all of the rest of the Countries put together). Some argue that the Death Penalty for a juvenile is “cruel and unusual punishment,” however criminologists have found that minors are more likely to act on impulse, and be more violent in nature. The patterns for crime start early and are not always deterred, causing a huge expense on our social systems over a criminals life-time.

Humanitarians define crime as an illness, a state of impaired functioning. If that is true, and all criminals (by nature of their crime) are neurologically, biologically, or chemically unbalanced, what is the Justice System supposed to do? How are we to treat this illness and “cure” the criminal?

We seem to be stuck between punishment and therapy, between accountability and competency. How do you meet the needs of those who are selfishly violating the law without consideration for the needs of others? Could we not all find a way to excuse the result of our poor choices and moments of weakness? If crime is considered only an illness, and not a wrong-doing, there is no justice, but only a so-called cure. To cure someone of an illness that he/she “could not help” leaves us without justice. First of all the individual is no longer held responsible for his actions, and if consequences do not follow actions, accountability fails.

We are asked to forgive the wrongs of the ill, yet the wrong must be admitted to be excused. If choice is not a consideration, an individual who commits a crime is no longer safe and free to exercise free will; his/her rights are revoked due to this incapacity to choose for oneself. It is a grave injustice to consider and treat a human being as unable to think, choose and act for themselves and be “therapeutic” when that is not the case.

If the “root of all evil lies” in choice or illness, then we have two choices: Dispose of those who CHOOSE their crimes by the highest form of accountability, “an eye for an eye” and “life for a life” or remove all human choice and rights from those who cannot abide within a law-abiding system.

It comes down to this: INSANE ASYLUM OR DEATH PENALTY. One is the answer for the therapist, the other for the executioner. We do not need to be gray in a black and white world.

****Adapted from information provided from Amnesty International and C.S. Lewis, the Injustice of Humanitarianism.**